

# 1

## Overview of Special Education

*After mastering the material in this chapter, you should be able to*

1. Define and explain the following terms and concepts:

special education	PL 94-142
exceptional children	early identification
categories of impairment	and intervention
litigation	labeling
mainstreaming	
2. Discuss the importance of developing and practicing effective helping skills.
3. Briefly describe what the term *special education* means and discuss its implications for those who render helping services.
4. Give a definition and brief description of the term *exceptional children*.
5. Understand and cite specific examples of how litigation, legislation, mainstreaming, early intervention, and labeling are important issues affecting the education of exceptional children.

*As Liza sang in 'My Fair Lady,' "wouldn't it be lovely" if it were common to see impaired children playing with their non-impaired friends in parks and in neighborhoods; to notice more quick smiles or welcomes by nonimpaired people when an impaired person comes into a room; to have an increased number of impaired employees in the work force but also increased numbers in the artistic community as well; to find fewer and fewer children functioning below their genetic potential because of lack of appropriate environmental stimulation. It is not only beautiful to think about, it is possible to achieve.*

—Nicholas J. Anastasiow

**T**he primary objectives of this second edition are essentially unchanged from the previous one. This revision is designed to fulfill and accomplish three basic purposes. First, it was written for those about to enter into or are already engaged in a profession that assists parents of exceptional children. This includes, but is not limited to, people such as special education teachers, regular classroom teachers, mental health workers, guidance counselors, social workers, vocational rehabilitation counselors, school administrators, psychologists, and physicians. The primary intent of this book is to help the reader improve his or her ability to counsel parents of exceptional children.

Second, this revised edition has updated and expanded sections on recent trends and developments in parent counseling, and is recommended as a primary or supplementary text for graduate or undergraduate students pursuing a degree in one of the many fields of special education. It may be used as a supplementary text in a counselor education program. The subject matter and arrangement of material also make this book appropriate for preservice or inservice training in local school systems or various agencies and organizations.

Third, this edition is a substantial overall revision of *Counseling Parents of Exceptional Children*. The first edition (1978) was written to tie together two essential considerations for effective counseling of parents of exceptional children:

1. Counselors need to have both a practical and theoretical understanding of the purpose, nature, and function of counseling.
2. Counselors need to understand the educational, personal, social, and economic problems encountered by parents with exceptional children and appropriate counseling strategies and techniques to help these parents.

ORGANIZATION OF THE BOOK

This book is in three parts. Chapter One introduces the text and discusses some critical contemporary issues in the special education field. The six chapters in Part One explore counseling theory and practice for helping parents of exceptional children.

Part Two includes a new chapter (Seven): "The Family and the Exceptional Child—Overview and Impact." Chapters Eight and Nine deal with counseling parents of mildly to profoundly handicapped children.

Part Three discusses some important considerations and principles for helping parents cope with the challenges faced by their gifted, talented, and creative children.

A Word About Terminology

Throughout this edition, the terms *counselor* and *helper* are used interchangeably. The individual or persons receiving help may be referred to, again interchangeably, as clients, helpees, interviewees, parents, or parents of exceptional children. Regardless of the specific terminology, I will be referring to someone who functions as counselor, and parents who receive the counselor's assistance, services, skills, and professional knowledge.

SUGGESTIONS TO THE READER

This volume does not claim to be comprehensive; it by no means attempts to discuss (even if this were possible) every facet of counseling parents of exceptional children. The reader should not expect to find magic formulas or prescriptions covering the entire spectrum of parental concerns and problems. Neither does this text suggest cookbook techniques or simple recipes for the helper to apply in any given counseling situation. This revision *does* provide basic information and a review of relevant literature, enabling professionals to form a better conceptual framework of the nature and function of the helping relationship.

As stated later in this text, "advice-giving" is a risky business; however, to enable you to obtain the maximum benefit from this text, I suggest five supplementary activities that will provide a more beneficial and systematic approach toward your study of this material:

1. Use the list of objectives, including terms and concepts, at the beginning of each chapter to focus, direct, and guide your study. Review these both *before* and *after* you begin to study each chapter.
2. Take advantage of the discussion questions at the end of each chapter, and feel free to add questions of your own. You may want to apply this saying to your endeavor: People do not gain wisdom by seeking the right answers; they find it by asking the right questions.
3. Use the primary references at the end of each chapter to further broaden your knowledge and understanding of a specific topic.

4. The suggested supplementary references at the end of each chapter provide an excellent opportunity to expand your knowledge and explore topics of personal interest in greater depth.
5. You don't become an effective helper simply by reading a book—you must constantly be aware of and strive to improve your skills as a helper. Don't be hesitant or afraid to use role-playing activities and/or videotaping to record, identify, discuss, and improve your helping skills.

Johnson (1981) suggests that interpersonal skills are learned just as other skills are learned, through

1. understanding why a skill is important and how it will be of value to you.
2. understanding what the skill is and the component behaviors needed to perform the skill.
3. finding situations where you can practice the skill.
4. getting someone to critique your performance of the skill.
5. practicing!
6. setting up practice units that you can easily master.
7. getting friends to encourage you to use the skill.
8. practicing until it feels real.

*Providing a stimulating early environment is critical to a child's development.*



You must have confidence in yourself and say, "This is a learning situation and I'm perfectly willing to take risks and learn from my mistakes (and the mistakes of others)."

Finally, be willing to make a personal commitment and undertake your own additional study or research. If a topic or issue is not covered to your complete satisfaction, then venture out on your own. There may be a more efficient way! Thinking, learning, and discovering are your own prerogatives—nobody else can do these for you. Given this spirit of inquiry and optimism, I hope you will learn and discover more than you thought possible about counseling parents of exceptional children.

Before concluding Chapter One, two other topics require attention. First, it is appropriate to acquaint (or reacquaint) the reader with special education and to define the areas that comprise this field of study. Second, it is important to identify and discuss some of the contemporary issues related to educating exceptional children.

## OVERVIEW OF SPECIAL EDUCATION

In his discussion of special education from past to present, Lilly (1979) suggests that special education history can be divided into four time periods:

- 1800–1900 Special education treatment begins; residential schooling is stressed
- 1900–1925 Many residential schools become custodial in nature; "new" handicaps are discovered
- 1925–1960 All types of special education undergo continuous, steady expansion
- 1960–1970 Controversy develops concerning nature and role of special education; federal influence increases

The subfield of education, or *special education*, evolved from these major movements. Although different terminology is used, there is general agreement about what constitutes special education. Heward and Orlansky (1984) offer a comprehensive view of special education by stating:

In one sense, it is a profession, with its own tools, techniques, and research efforts, all focused on improving instructional arrangements and procedures for evaluating and meeting the learning needs of exceptional children and adults. At a more practical level, special education is the individually planned and systematically monitored arrangement of physical settings, special equipment and materials, teaching procedures and the other interventions designed to help exceptional children achieve the greatest possible personal self-sufficiency and academic success. (p. 18)

In light of this definition, one central question remains: Who are exceptional children? Kneedler (1984) offers this straightforward comment:

Exceptional children are those whose characteristics are so different from most children's that the usual educational programs of the public schools are not appropriate for them. These children are extremely unlikely to achieve their full human potential without a special program designed to capitalize on their abilities and/or help them overcome their disabilities. (p. 7)

Many authors also point out the distinction between the terms *exceptional*, *disabled*, and *handicapped*, often used interchangeably to refer to the same individual. Mandell and Fiscus (1981) identified an exceptional child as one who is atypical and whose performance deviates from what is expected. (The term *exceptional children* would then include the intellectually gifted as well as the mentally retarded child because both deviate from the norm.) Disability refers to either a total or partial behavioral, mental, physical, or sensory loss of functioning. In other words, all disabled people are exceptional; the reverse is not true. A disability or exceptionality is within an individual; a handicap refers to a person's environmental restrictions because of his or her disability or impairment.

Exceptional children are frequently grouped into categories. This arbitrary grouping of students may be done for a number of reasons—certainly it facilitates communication among professionals and also serves to expedite the allocation of federal and state funds for exceptional children.

According to Kneedler (1984), the following groups are typically included as exceptional:

- |                           |                                   |
|---------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Mentally Retarded      | 5. Hearing Impaired               |
| 2. Learning Disabled      | 6. Visually Impaired              |
| 3. Emotionally Disturbed  | 7. Speech and Language Disordered |
| 4. Physically Handicapped | 8. Gifted and Talented            |

Kirk and Gallagher (1983) suggest a slightly different arrangement of groupings as typical:

1. Mental deviations, including children who are intellectually superior and slow in learning ability/mentally retarded;
2. Sensory handicaps, including children with auditory impairments and visual impairments;
3. Communication disorders, including learning disabilities and speech and language impairments;
4. Behavior disorders, including emotional disturbance and social maladjustment;
5. Multiple and severe handicaps, including various combinations of impairments: cerebral palsy and mental retardation, deaf-blind, severe physical and intellectual disabilities, and so forth.

In the Education for All Handicapped Children Act (Public Law 94-142\*), impairments are established for handicapped children. According to this legislation, handicapped children must meet two criteria: The child must have one or more of the disabilities listed in the next section, and he or she must require special education and related services. In other words, not all children who have a disability require special education; many are able to and should attend school without any program modification. Some of the disabilities included in the PL 94-142 definition are

- ☐ Deaf  
A hearing impairment so severe that the child cannot understand what is being said with or without a hearing aid.
- ☐ Deaf-blind  
A combination of hearing and visual impairments causing such severe communication, developmental, and educational problems that the child cannot be accommodated in either a specific program for the deaf or one for the blind.
- ☐ Hard of hearing  
A hearing impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance but is not as severe as deafness.
- ☐ Mentally retarded  
Subaverage intellectual functioning and deficits in adaptive behavior. These deficits should have been observable throughout the child's development.
- ☐ Multiple-handicapped  
A combination of impairments, other than deaf-blindness, that causes such severe problems that the child cannot be accommodated in a special education program for any one impairment.
- ☐ Orthopedically impaired  
A severe physical disability that adversely affects educational performance. The term includes impairments such as a club foot, absence of a limb, cerebral palsy, poliomyelitis, and bone tuberculosis.
- ☐ Other health impaired  
Limited strength, vitality, or alertness due to chronic or acute health problems such as rheumatic fever, asthma, hemophilia, and leukemia, that adversely affect the child's educational development.
- ☐ Seriously emotionally disturbed  
Children who have a marked degree of one or more of the following characteristics displayed over a long period of time:
  - An inability to learn that cannot be explained by intellectual, sensory, or health factors.
  - An inability to build or maintain satisfactory interpersonal relationships.
  - Inappropriate types of behavior or feelings under normal circumstances.

\*Legislation is typically designated PL (for Public Law), followed by a hyphenated number. The first number signifies the number of the Congress that passed the bill; the second number indicates the exact number of the bill. PL 94-142, then, was the 142nd Public Law enacted by the 94th Congress.

A general pervasive mood of unhappiness or depression.

A tendency to develop physical symptoms or fears associated with personal or school problems.

This term does not include students who are socially maladjusted, unless they are also seriously emotionally disturbed.

- ☐ Specific learning disability  
A disorder affecting the child's understanding or use of spoken or written language. The student's ability to listen, think, speak, read, write, spell, or do mathematical calculations may be affected. Conditions such as perceptual handicaps, brain injury, minimal brain dysfunction, dyslexia, and developmental aphasia are included in this category. This term does not include children who have learning problems that are primarily the result of visual, hearing, or motor handicaps; mental retardation; or environmental, cultural, or economic disadvantage.
- ☐ Speech impaired  
A communication disorder such as stuttering or impaired articulation, a language impairment, or a voice impairment that adversely affects a child's educational performance.
- ☐ Visually handicapped  
A visual impairment that, even with correction, adversely affects a child's educational performance. The term includes both partially seeing and blind children.

## CONTEMPORARY ISSUES IN SPECIAL EDUCATION

Some of the critical issues in the education of exceptional children should be briefly discussed. These issues directly or indirectly affect not only professionals who work with exceptional children and youth, but also parents and their children. These issues are as follows:

- |  |                            |
|--|----------------------------|
| 1. Litigation                                    | 4. Early Identification    |
| 2. Legislation                                   | and Intervention           |
| 3. Mainstreaming (Least Restrictive Environment) | 5. Labeling/Classification |

The discussion that follows is not a complete listing and chronology of all major issues; it is an attempt to focus on selected issues relevant to the field of special education and to emphasize how these issues influence the education of exceptional children. Readers interested in a more detailed coverage should refer to the primary and supplemental references cited at the end of this chapter or consult any of the introductory texts in special education now available.

### Litigation

Litigation comes from the word *litigate*, which, according to Webster's New Collegiate Dictionary, means "to carry on legal contest by judicial process." Weintraub and Abeson (1974) describe a quiet revolution that has been

fought within American education during the past few years to protect the right to an education for all American children—particularly the handicapped, whose mental, physical, emotional, or learning problems require special education services. Weintraub and Abeson comment:

This revolution to establish for the handicapped the same right to an education that already exists for the nonhandicapped has been occurring throughout the nation, in state and local school board rooms, state legislative chambers, and perhaps most importantly, in the nation's courts.

The legality of denying a public education to handicapped children by exclusion, postponement, or any other means is increasingly being challenged. The basis for this challenge comes from the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which guarantees to all the people equal protection of the laws. (pp. 526–529)

Judicial action has undoubtedly been a primary vehicle in stopping inequity and suggesting procedural remedies and relief for our handicapped population. Schmid and Nagata (1983) remind us that the *Brown v. Board of Education* decision of 1954 had great impact on litigation for the handicapped. The Warren Court, in declaring school segregation illegal because it violated the equal protection clause of the Fourteenth Amendment, provided the legal base for subsequent right to education litigation. A landmark decision in securing rights for the mentally retarded was *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children (PARC) v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania* (1971). In this class action suit, the PARC and parents of certain retarded children brought suit against the state of Pennsylvania, seeking a ruling against statutes excluding retarded children from educational programs and training in public schools, and claiming the statutes were unconstitutional and should not be enforced. Four expert witnesses testified that all mentally retarded persons are capable of benefiting from a program of education and training. As the result of a consent agreement, it was determined that the state could not apply any law that would postpone, terminate, or deny mentally retarded children access to a free, publicly supported education. In the final analysis, children could not be denied a public education or be excluded from school on the grounds that they were "unable to profit" from school attendance. (Table 1.1 provides a summary of major court cases.) Singletary, Collings, and Dennis (1977) conclude that litigation in exceptional child education may be summarized as follows:

1. Exceptional child litigation has been developmental in concept. In *Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Children v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, it was established that the Commonwealth has an obligation to place each mentally retarded child in a free, public program of education and training appropriate to the child's capacity. Appropriateness of education was expanded to educational adequacy in *Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia* (1972). In addition, the Mills case addressed the issue of the child's needs.

2. Exceptional child litigation has a resounding success rate with rulings in favor of the children with special needs.
3. Exceptional child litigation has not attempted to establish that there is a Constitutional right to an education or "fundamental interest" as was planned in *Serrano v. Priest*. Once a state elects to provide an education for some, however, the state must provide an education for all.
4. A large number of child advocacy groups support exceptional child litigation.
5. Exceptional child litigation is often led by young attorneys who are aware of the social and legal responsiveness to rights for special children, a situation somewhat similar to the establishment of civil rights in the sixties.
6. Passage of mandatory state statutes establishing the possibility for program development for special youngsters has enhanced exceptional child litigation.
7. Exceptional child litigation is increasing in incidence.
8. Exceptional child litigation has evolved to cover a variety of legal ramifications in establishing rights for exceptional children. Because it has been a step-by-step evolution, a state's total financing scheme is not disrupted.
9. Exceptional child litigation has used legal concepts and consultants from many disciplines.
10. The basic concern of each landmark case discussed is that if we provide an education for some, we must provide it for all, and in providing an education, we must ensure the child's rights to screening, testing, labeling, placement, and development of a comprehensive educational plan for his education. (pp. 490–493)

TABLE 1.1 Summary of court cases

Year	Court Cases
1954	<i>Brown v. Topeka Board of Education</i> (Kansas) Established the right of all children to an equal opportunity to an education.
1968	<i>Hobson v. Hansen</i> (Washington, D.C.) Declared the track system, which used standardized tests as a basis for special education placement, unconstitutional because it discriminated against black and poor children.
1970	<i>Diana v. State Board of Education</i> (California) Declared that children cannot be placed in special education on the basis of culturally biased tests or tests given in other than the child's native language.
1972	<i>Mills v. Board of Education of the District of Columbia</i> Established the right of every child to an equal opportunity for education; declared that lack of funds was not an acceptable excuse for lack of educational opportunity.

(TABLE 1.1, continued)

Year	Court Cases
1972	<i>Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania</i> Class action suit to establish the right to free public education for all retarded children
1972	<i>Wyatt v. Stickney</i> (Alabama) Declared that individuals in state institutions have the right to appropriate treatment within those institutions.
1979	<i>Central York District v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania Department of Education</i> Ruled that school districts must provide services for gifted and talented children whether or not advance guarantee of reimbursement from the state has been received.
1979	<i>Larry P. v. Riles</i> (California) (first brought to court in 1972) Ruled that IQ tests cannot be used as the sole basis for placing children in special classes.
1979	<i>Armstrong v. Kline</i> (Pennsylvania) Established right of some severely handicapped children to an extension of the 180-day public school year.
1982	<i>Rowley v. Hendrick Hudson School District</i> (New York) First case based on PL 94-142 to reach the U.S. Supreme Court. While denying the plaintiff's specific request to have a sign language interpreter in their child's mainstream class, the decision upheld each handicapped child's right to a personalized program of instruction and necessary supportive services, no matter what their cost. The <i>Rowley</i> decision affirmed the role of parents in educational decisions as well as made school systems accountable for proving that a handicapped child's education is beneficial (Shrybman, 1982).
1985	In a class action suit filed against the Georgia Department of Education and the Savannah-Chatham County Board of Education, the U.S. Supreme Court upheld a ruling that local school systems may be forced to provide mentally or emotionally handicapped children with year-round schooling ("Year-round schooling," 1985).

Mandell and Fiscus (1981) believe that litigation is likely to be a force demanding the rights of children in the future. It seems certain that litigation will continue to play a major role in developing federal and state policies for the education and welfare of the handicapped. The results of several earlier cases clearly indicate that the courts will intervene when equal educational opportunities are denied to the handicapped. In the case of the

*Pennsylvania Association for Retarded Citizens v. Commonwealth of Pennsylvania*, for example, the three-judge federal panel emphatically stated:

We have absolutely no hesitation about approving the Agreements as fair and reasonable to the plaintiffs. Approval means that plaintiff retarded children who heretofore had been excluded from a public program of education and training will no longer be so excluded after September 1, 1972. Today, with the following Order, this group of citizens will have new hope in their quest for a life of dignity and self-sufficiency. (Lippman & Goldberg, 1973, pp. 133-134)

Shrybman (1982) offers the following observation:

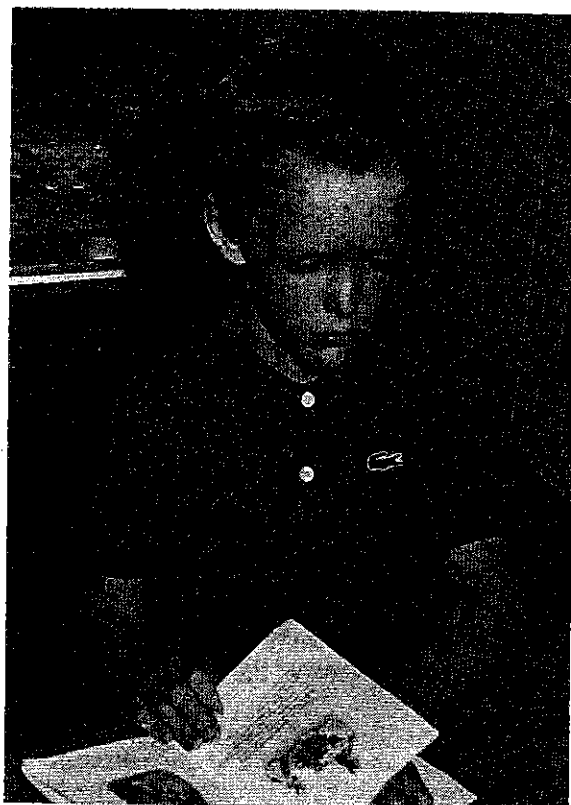
The 1980s appear to be ushering in an era in which the trend of the federal government returning to the states and localities more control over their special education policy will increase. The U.S. Department of Education has adopted the general objective of reducing the burdens and costs of existing and future PL 94-142 regulations. The department will continue to review the regulations in an on-going process to:

- ☐ Avoid unnecessary regulation
- ☐ Reduce compliance requirements
- ☐ Increase agency accountability for regulatory actions
- ☐ Ensure the societal benefits of the regulations outweigh the cost to society
- ☐ Eliminate burdensome, unnecessary, and unproductive paperwork
- ☐ Minimize the cost of rulemaking to the federal government
- ☐ Ensure that the department is collecting only the information it needs
- ☐ Specifically, reduce burdens for small entities (p. 41).

### Legislation

In discussing litigation and legislation, Cartwright, Cartwright, and Ward (1981) stress that although logically the provision of education and other services to the handicapped has been humanistic, the compelling reason has been legislation and court decrees requiring such services. In short, we now have free public education for handicapped children because it is the law. Legislation is the second major force (litigation being the first) in the dramatic development and expansion of special education services. Legislation may be defined simply and straightforwardly as the passage and enactment of laws by the United States Congress or state legislature.

Ysseldyke and Algozzine (1984) noted that although there is a relatively long history of legislation for providing services to handicapped persons, prior to 1950 such legislation was directed primarily toward providing institutional care or rehabilitative services. Federal legislation increased for exceptional persons during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Table 1.2 summarizes the major legislative developments from 1958 to 1978.



*Free public education for handicapped children is the law.*

**TABLE 1.2** Legislative developments from 1958 to 1978

Year	Legislation
1958	PL 85-926 National Defense Education Act Provided funds for teaching professionals to train teachers of mentally retarded children.
1961	PL 87-276 Special Education Act Provided funds for teaching professionals to train teachers of deaf children.
1963	PL 88-164 Mental Retardation Facility and Community Center Construction Act Extended support given in PL 85-926 to training teachers of other handicapped children as well as teachers of mentally retarded children.
1965	PL 89-10 The Elementary and Secondary Education Act Provided money to states and local districts to develop programs for

**(TABLE 1.2, continued)**

Year	Legislation
	economically disadvantaged and handicapped children.
1966	PL 89-313 Amendment to Title 1 of The Elementary and Secondary Education Act Provided funding for state-supported programs in institutions and other settings for handicapped children.
1966	PL 89-750 Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Created the Bureau of Education for the Handicapped.
1969	PL 91-320 The Learning Disabilities Act Defined learning disabilities; provided funds for state-level programs for learning-disabled children.
1970	PL 91-230 Amendments to the Elementary and Secondary Education Act Recognized handicapped and exceptional children as a single population with special needs.
1973	PL 93-112, Section 504 Rehabilitation Act (actually adopted in 1977) Declared that handicapped people cannot be excluded from any program or activity receiving federal funds on the basis of the handicap alone.
1974	PL 93-380 Education Amendments Extended previous legislation. For the first time provided money to state and local districts for programs for gifted and talented students. Also protected rights of handicapped children and parents in placement decisions.
1975	PL 94-103 Developmental Disabilities Assistance and Bill of Rights Act Affirmed rights of mentally retarded citizens and cited areas where services must be provided for the retarded and developmentally disabled.
1975	PL 94-142 Education for All Handicapped Children Act Mandated free, appropriate public education for all handicapped children regardless of handicap severity; protected rights of handicapped children and parents in educational decision making; required that an individualized education program (IEP) be developed for each handicapped child and that handicapped students receive educational services in the least restrictive environment.
1978	PL 95-561 Gifted and Talented Children's Education Act Provided financial incentives for states and local education agencies to identify and educate gifted and talented students, to provide in-service training, and to conduct research.

The passage of the Education for All Handicapped Children Act of 1975 (frequently referred to as Public Law 94-142 or PL 94-142) made public education of the handicapped a reality and is thus often considered the most important legislation in the special education movement. Approved by margins of 375 to 44 in the U.S. House of Representatives and 83 to 10 in the U.S. Senate (and signed by President Gerald Ford on November 29, 1975), PL 94-142 has become law, and thus the quiet revolution to achieve basic educational rights for all children with handicaps nears its goal (Abeson & Zettel, 1977).

In its opening passages, PL 94-142 states:

There are more than eight million handicapped children in the United States, and these children have special educational needs that are not being fully met. More than half of them do not receive appropriate educational services. One million [are in fact] excluded entirely from the public school system.

PL 94-142 also notes that many other handicapped children, because their handicaps have not been detected, are not succeeding in school.

PL 94-142 was significant for several reasons: first, it expanded the educational rights established in PL 93-380 and increased federal regulatory control of special education; second, it promised substantial federal investment in special education; third, it established the right to education among other issues as a national priority in special education; and finally, PL 94-142 is permanent legislation without an expiration date, a rarity in federal legislation that is indicative of Congress' commitment (Lilly, 1979).

The provisions of PL 94-142 are too lengthy to cover in full detail; however, this legislation does contain certain key elements that should be noted:

- ☐ A mandatory provision states "in order to receive funds under the Act every school system in the action must make provision for a free, appropriate public education for every child between the ages of 3 and 21 (unless state law does not provide free public education to children 3 to 5 or 18 to 21 years of age) regardless of how, or how seriously, he may be handicapped." 94-142 also provides each handicapped child the right to be educated in the *least restrictive environment* (LRE).
- ☐ Each handicapped child shall be entitled to a written individualized education program (IEP) developed by a local education agency representative, the teacher, the parents or guardian of the child, and whenever appropriate, the child concerned.
- ☐ In school placement procedures or in any decisions concerning a handicapped child's educational needs and placement, the child's parents or guardian must be consulted.
- ☐ The right to due process was established, which protects the individual from erroneous classification, inappropriate labeling, and unequal education with the nonhandicapped.

- ☐ PL 94-142 protects against discriminatory testing in diagnosis. Tests and other evaluation material used in placing handicapped children will be prepared and administered in the child's native tongue without racial or cultural discrimination.
- ☐ State and local educational agencies shall take steps to ensure that handicapped children have the variety of programs and services available to non-handicapped children, including industrial arts, home economics, and vocational education.
- ☐ The results of evaluation and placement must be kept confidential; however, the parents or guardian may have access to records regarding their child.

As Shrybman (1982) has noted, "the entire thrust of the law [PL 94-142] is based on the right of all children, with no exceptions, to an education. Its intent is to give all children, including the most severely handicapped, the learning opportunities they need to achieve their potential and become as self-sufficient as possible" (p. 14).

### Mainstreaming

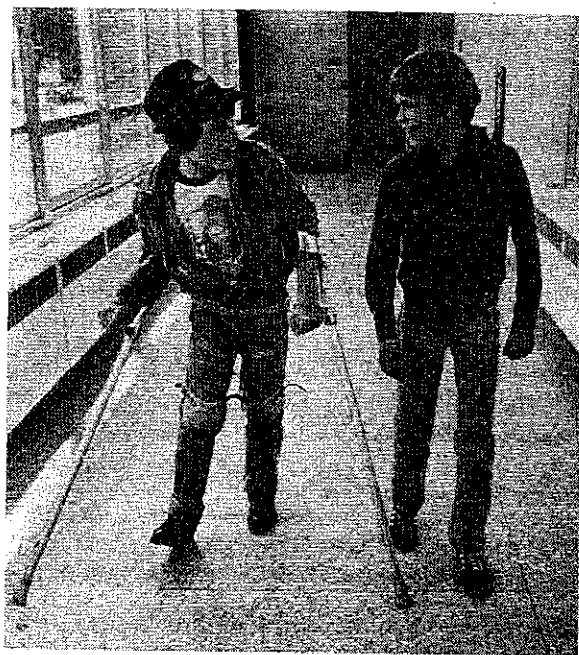
Terms such as *mainstreaming*, *normalization*, and the *least restrictive environment* are very much in vogue today and part of the educational jargon when speaking about placement of handicapped children. Precise definitions of mainstreaming vary. According to Hutt and Gibby (1976),

they have in common the philosophy that the retarded child should be moved back into the regular classroom as rapidly as possible, or if that is not feasible, he should have some time each day when he can interact with, and learn with, normal children in regular classroom settings. (p. 391)

Magoon and Garrison (1976) offer the following views on mainstreaming:

The current trend in American education is toward mainstreaming exceptional children rather than isolating them in special education classes. Mainstreaming refers to placing exceptional children in the regular classroom. Of course, the placement must consider the scope of the child's psychophysical capabilities. Hence, a crippled youngster might be assigned to a regular classroom for affective and cognitive activities and to an alternative physical education class.

The relative merits of mainstreaming have been debated for many years, and the dialogue continues unabated. Historically, special education—like all education—swings from one philosophy to another. First, the movement may be toward isolating special children from the general student body. Then the pendulum swings back toward integration. Two forces—the popularity of the humanist movement and the meteoric rise in the cost of education—are behind today's swing toward mainstreaming. In addition, supporters of mainstream-



*A crippled youngster may be mainstreamed in a regular classroom for affective and cognitive activities and assigned to an alternative physical education class.*

ing point out that (1) exceptional children should be educated in the same environment in which they will have to live (i.e., the school should teach them to cope with outside society); (2) exceptional children (with the possible exception of the gifted) need to have "normal" models to emulate; and (3) (as noted earlier) labeling and isolating children is often inappropriate. Opponents of mainstreaming argue that: (1) the regular classroom teacher is already overburdened with socioeducational problems; (2) the regular teacher has not been trained to identify or provide for exceptional students; and (3) the economic attractiveness of mainstreaming has led school administrators (and some of the general public) to "conveniently overlook" the best interests of exceptional children. The opponents argue that mainstreaming is not humanistic, in spite of supporters' claims to the contrary. When viewed from an educational perspective, mainstreaming is not necessarily in the best interests of the individual special child, who may not always receive the optimum education to allow him to maximize his potential for development.

In the future we may very well move toward a compromise, a middle-of-the-road position. Arguments such as these feed the fires of debate and assure that the educational provisions for exceptional children will never become static. (pp. 116-117)

Dybwad (1980) speaks of the heated controversy and misconceptions attached to the catchwords *mainstreaming*, *normalization*, and the *least*

*restrictive environment*. He points out that these terms sometimes seem to represent an intrusion by a coalition of meddlesome civil rights lawyers and discontented parents on well-established philosophy and practices in the field of special education. According to Dybwad, this argument is an oversimplification, if not a distortion, that ignores significant historical development. To clarify much of the confusion and misunderstanding, Kneedler (1984) offers the following definitions:

*Normalization*

Making the handicapped child's life, including his or her education, as much like that of the nonhandicapped as possible.

*Mainstreaming*

Placing handicapped and nonhandicapped children together for education.

*Least restrictive environment*

Placing the handicapped child in as normal an environment as is consistent with an appropriate education.

Mandell and Fiscus (1981) point out that the least restrictive environment does not mean that all exceptional children will be educated in regular classrooms; it does not mean that all pupils with handicaps will be placed in self-contained special classes or even in special education programs. What it *does* mean is that when determining the most appropriate setting for a handicapped child, educators must select the least restrictive program alternative relative to the normal school processes. It is assumed that a variety of special programs and types of placements must be available if handicapped children cannot succeed in regular classes. Leinhardt and Pallay (1982) conducted a comprehensive review of available literature about the least restrictive environment and found that the variables most important for a successful student can occur in most settings, and that for moral and ethical reasons the least restrictive environment is preferred. Educators should, therefore, focus less on debates of setting and more on identifying and implementing sound educational processes.

### *Early Identification and Intervention*

Hayden and McGinnes (1977) stress early identification and intervention in educating the handicapped: "Until we are able to point to a well-established system of public education for the handicapped child from the moment when his handicap is identified, we cannot rest content" (pp. 153-154).

They advocate early intervention for the following reasons:

1. Early experience does have an influence that affects all areas of functioning.
2. Research has shown that there are critical periods for the development of certain skills, most of which occur during the first three years of life.

3. Failure to provide a stimulating early environment leads not only to a continuation of the development status quo, but to actual atrophy of sensory abilities and to developmental regression.
4. All systems of an organism are interrelated in a dynamic way—failure to remediate one handicap may multiply its effect in other developmental areas.
5. With a delay in remediating an intellectual or cognitive handicap, there is a decrease in cumulative achievement even within a single area of functioning.
6. Early intervention has been shown to help; it can work to reduce the effects of a handicapping condition more surely and rapidly than later intervention.
7. The cost-benefit rationale of early intervention is usually more economical than later intervention.
8. Parents need support during early weeks and months, models of good parenting behavior with a handicapped child, and specific instructions for working with the child before patterns of parenting become established.

Bryan and Bryan (1979) have noted some problems that accompany efforts to detect and help children who may experience future academic difficulties. First, it is not clear how such predictions can be made. Which tools, what procedures, which rate of false negative and false positive diagnosis should be employed in detection? Second, labeling the child as high-risk may produce a self-fulfilling prophesy. Once a child is diagnosed as being high-risk, will negative reactions from others increase the likelihood of the child's academic failure? Regardless of these problems in early detection and intervention, those witnessing the development and initiation of early childhood special education services and programs are optimistic. Heward and Orlansky (1984) point out that virtually every special educator today recognizes the importance of early intervention for both handicapped and high-risk children, and most agree that the earlier the intervention begins, the better.

Mandell and Fiscus (1981) have outlined four stages of early identification: population/program definition, screening, diagnosis, and intervention (see Table 1.3). Each stage depends on the preceeding one, although a child may enter the process at the diagnosis level when referred directly by parents or agencies.

### ***Labeling/Classification of Exceptional Children***

In his book *The Futures of Children: Categories, Labels, and their Consequences*, Hobbs (1975) refers to classification as serious because it can profoundly affect what happens to a child. Classification can open doors to services and experiences the child needs for growing competence. On the other hand, inappropriate classification can blight the life of a child—it can reduce opportunity, diminish competence and self-esteem, cause alienation

**TABLE 1.3** *The early identification process*

Steps	Activities	Outcome
1. Population/ Program Definition	a. Determine geographic region to be served b. Determine age group to be screened c. Describe problems to be identified d. Define pass/refer criteria e. Determine appropriate outreach method	Clear purpose for initiating screening program is identified
2. Screening	Administer appropriate tests, parent questionnaires, interviews	Children having potential problems are referred for diagnosis
3. Diagnosis	Provide in-depth examination by professionals of suspected problem area	Confirmation or denial of problem—children with diagnosed problem receive intervention
4. Intervention	Implement appropriate treatment and/or educational plan based upon diagnostic information	Amelioration, remediation of identified learning and behavior deficit

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from others, and prevent realization of the child's potential. Few topics in special education have received more attention than the effects of labels. Meyen (1982) suggests that most special educators agree that labeling exceptional children not only conveys negative information about the labeled child, but also tends to have a negative influence on the child's life.

Kirk and Gallagher (1983) explore the major differences of opinion about classifying exceptional children in subgroups. They find that those who oppose categorizing usually feel that (1) classification leads to misclassification and mislabeling, particularly in low-income families; (2) categories do not lead to educationally relevant programs; and (3) categories and labels are detrimental to the self-concept of the labeled children. Those who favor classification state that (1) the purpose of classification is to bring the special child into contact with trained personnel who will provide a special educational program; (2) categorizing exceptional children focuses the attention of lawmakers on their problems and aids in obtaining legisla-

tion to support special programs; (3) categories allow us to pursue the causes of the handicapping conditions; and (4) categories, when used properly, aid in communication.

While acknowledging that classification is a necessary activity in all disciplines, Heward and Orlansky (1983) present a compelling argument against the traditional classification systems now in practice. Their strongest objection is that current systems are not educationally relevant. Knowing that a child is classified as "mentally retarded" indicates neither what specific skills the child needs to learn nor how the skills may best be taught. In light of the relevancy issue, Heward and Orlansky suggest that alternative classification systems be devised based on educationally relevant variables, leading to strategies tailored to a child's individual needs. In a similar vein, Reynolds (1984) suggests that special education classification should be oriented toward dimensions, such as academic achievement and educational potential, rather than categories. Several years earlier, Reynolds and Balow (1972) stressed the importance of variables using an analogue with the weather: If temperature, humidity, and atmospheric pressure (the variables) can be measured reliably, why not use the variables directly to characterize the weather on a particular day rather than simply describing the weather as "hot" and "muggy." As the question of the effects of labeling children lingers on, it appears that the creation of new labels is not the solution. Instead, we should continue seeking alternative treatment systems rather than focusing on simple and often misleading descriptions of handicapping conditions.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

It is important that professionals who interact with parents of exceptional children develop and practice appropriate helping skills. Using the suggested five-step process on page 2 to improve these crucial communication skills will increase the likelihood that our contacts with parents of exceptional children will be more productive and beneficial.

The term *special education* is used to denote the services, special equipment, and materials usually extended to children whose needs cannot be met in the regular classroom. Special education, therefore, is for the exceptional child. By definition, this child deviates from the norm in performance or ability as a result of sensory handicaps, mental deviations, communication disorders, learning disabilities, or health impairments.

Several issues were discussed to supply the reader with some essential information in gaining an overall perspective of the field of special education. A working knowledge and understanding of *litigation* is important because the courts have ruled in a number of cases (many of them class actions) in favor of handicapped children. In doing so, the right of the handicapped to a free and appropriate public education has been reaffirmed.

Appropriate *legislation* at the federal/state levels has also ensured the handicapped of their right to an appropriate education. PL 94-142 currently stands out as the best example of such legislation. *Mainstreaming*, *least restrictive environment*, and *normalization* were included and discussed not only because the meanings are often confused, but because of the profound effect they had upon special education. *Early detection and intervention* is a prevailing belief among professionals that early identification coupled with proper prenatal care and a nurturing environment play a profound role in shaping the handicapped child's intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development. *Labeling*, or the classification of exceptional children, continues to spark controversy and discussion primarily because a label tends to say very little about the child and provides scant information for planning appropriate educational programs and services.

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